## Relational Dialectics

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Dialectic</th>
<th>Essential Tension</th>
<th>Organizational Examples</th>
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| Connection-Autonomy        | The desire to establish connection with others vs. the desire to establish freedom of action | • Wanting to be part of a team yet wanting to stand out as an individual  
• In a networked organization, wanting to establish closer links to a partner organization yet not wanting to limiting your business choices by the partnership arrangement  
• Establishing rapport with a salesperson but not wanting to feel obligated to purchase |
| Openness-Closedness        | The desire to allow information to be disclosed or free flowing vs. the desire to maintain privacy | • Talking about your work with a colleague who works for a competitor but being careful not to disclose organizational “secrets”  
• Telling a member of your team about organizational plans but trying not to disclose information you were asked to treat as confidential  
• Chatting with your boss about your weekend but wanting to keep some things private |
| Novelty-Predictability     | The desire for the relationship to be predictable vs. the desire for it to be new and fresh | • Enjoying your friend’s ritualistic gossip about work yet feeling a bit annoyed at his complaining about “the same old things”  
• Being comforted by a vendor’s standardized service procedure yet wondering if it’s time for it to be updated  
• Feeling excited about a restructuring of the organization but anxious that it will disrupt familiar routines and relationships |
| Equality-Inequality        | The desire to have people considered equals vs. the desire to have some considered superior | • Feeling excited by a promotion yet anxious that it will strain relationships with co-workers in your former work group  
• A CEO downplaying status differences (e.g. “Call me Karen”) but cultivating a larger than life image  
• Arguing for equitable benefits for organizational members but making exceptions for contract workers |
| Instrumentality-Affection  | The desire for liking/affection to be an end in itself vs. the desire to use liking/affection as a means to an end | • Inviting a co-worker to lunch with the intention of asking for support on a controversial work issue  
• Wondering why a supervisor has suddenly started being so attentive and considerate |
| Impartiality-Favoritism    | The desire to have people treated fairly and impartially vs. the desire to be “special” | • Wanting to get the “inside scoop” from the boss (who is also a close friend) while wanting to portray the workplace as fair and impartial  
• Establishing a policy to address lateness yet making exceptions for certain people |